

April 10, 2008

**Obey SAYS ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY IN IRAQ
WILL RUIN THE NEXT PRESIDENCY TOO**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - At a House Appropriations Committee hearing today, Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) told U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, that he has "three very large problems" with the Administration's interpretation of events in Iraq.

Obey's statement is below:

"You know the old French saying, the more things change, the more they remain the same."

"We've been mired in this war now for five years." The so-called surge has been touted

as a success because the number of violent actions in Iraq has dropped. But in fact, I've got three very large problems with that interpretation.

- *"First, it ignores the fact that a good deal of the decline in violence is simply because many regions have been effectively ethnically cleansed. The groups have already been separated. Example: Baghdad once had a sixty-five percent Sunni majority population. It's now around a seventy-five to eighty percent Shia majority city.*

- *"Second, you have the implied argument that violence will start up again when the Surge dissipates and we begin to leave. That, to me, is a confession that the basic realities have not changed. What it really is saying is that violence will go down only so long as we have a huge presence there or else the parties will be at each others throats. That means we're caught in a Groundhog Day loop, and the logic of that would have us stay there forever, because the Surge apparently only works so long as we are surging.*

- *"Third, the Administration cannot tell us when withdrawal is feasible. They can't tell us how many troops they expect to be there in Iraq at the end of the year. That means, in my view, there's no real plan for getting out. It means the Administration really doesn't have an exit strategy, except a wing and a prayer. It reminds me of a poker player who compulsively always stays in the game, no matter how bad his cards are, in the faint hope that something will turn up.*

"In my view we need to set a goal - if not a deadline than at least a goal - for ending our participation in combat in order to shake up the place. It seems to me that such a goal would send a message to our friends that they have to shape up and compromise and it would send a

message to our enemies that they no longer can persuade people that we are an occupying empire who intends to stay in Iraq forever.

"We can speculate about what will happen in Iraq, but there is no need to speculate about what those actions mean on the home front because we already know what the continued presence in Iraq is costing us in terms of lost opportunities at home.

"I'm sad to say that this war has already ruined one Administration. I think the Administration's policies have already guaranteed that it will ruin the next one.

"The hard reality is therefore that any incoming Administration will need at least six months, and probably more, to begin to arrange a responsible and orderly withdrawal from combat activities. And they will then probably take a year or more from the date of decision to actually accomplish a prudent withdrawal.

"That means that at least the first two years of the next administration will be consumed by cleaning up this god awful mess. That will cost at least two hundred billion dollars; and it will mean that for more than two years there will be no money for healthcare, there will be no money to make major repairs on our own economy and our own national infrastructure.

"Elections are supposed to bring to a country a fresh start and a new beginning. And in my view, this Administration's policy in Iraq has effectively denied that new beginning to the President's successor. It's tragic. It's infuriating. And it's why so many of us have fought to try to get the Administration to face reality.

As I've said many times, it reminds me of the old story about Eddie Stanky. He used to play second base for the old New York Giants. And Leo Durocher was the manager. At spring training, Durocher was hitting ground balls to the infield and Stanky dropped two in a row. Durocher says 'Here kid, I'll show you how it's done.' He grabbed a glove, went out to second base, and the very first ball hit to Durocher, Durocher drops. Durocher turns to Stanky and says, 'Blast it kid, you've got second base so screwed up nobody can play it.'

Now, that's a funny story, but it's not funny when applied to Iraq, because the sad truth is, if you substitute Iraq for second base, and George Bush for Eddie Stanky, you've got the picture. And it's a picture that, I think, has ruined the ability of whoever becomes the next president to put this country on a fresh course on anything.

I hate to say that, but it's a sad reality. That's why there needs to be a sense of urgency

about this issue."

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